



RIVER HOLME
CONNECTIONS



American skunk cabbage removal
at Meltham Pleasure Grounds

2019 Annual Report River Holme Connections

Annual Report 2019

Contents

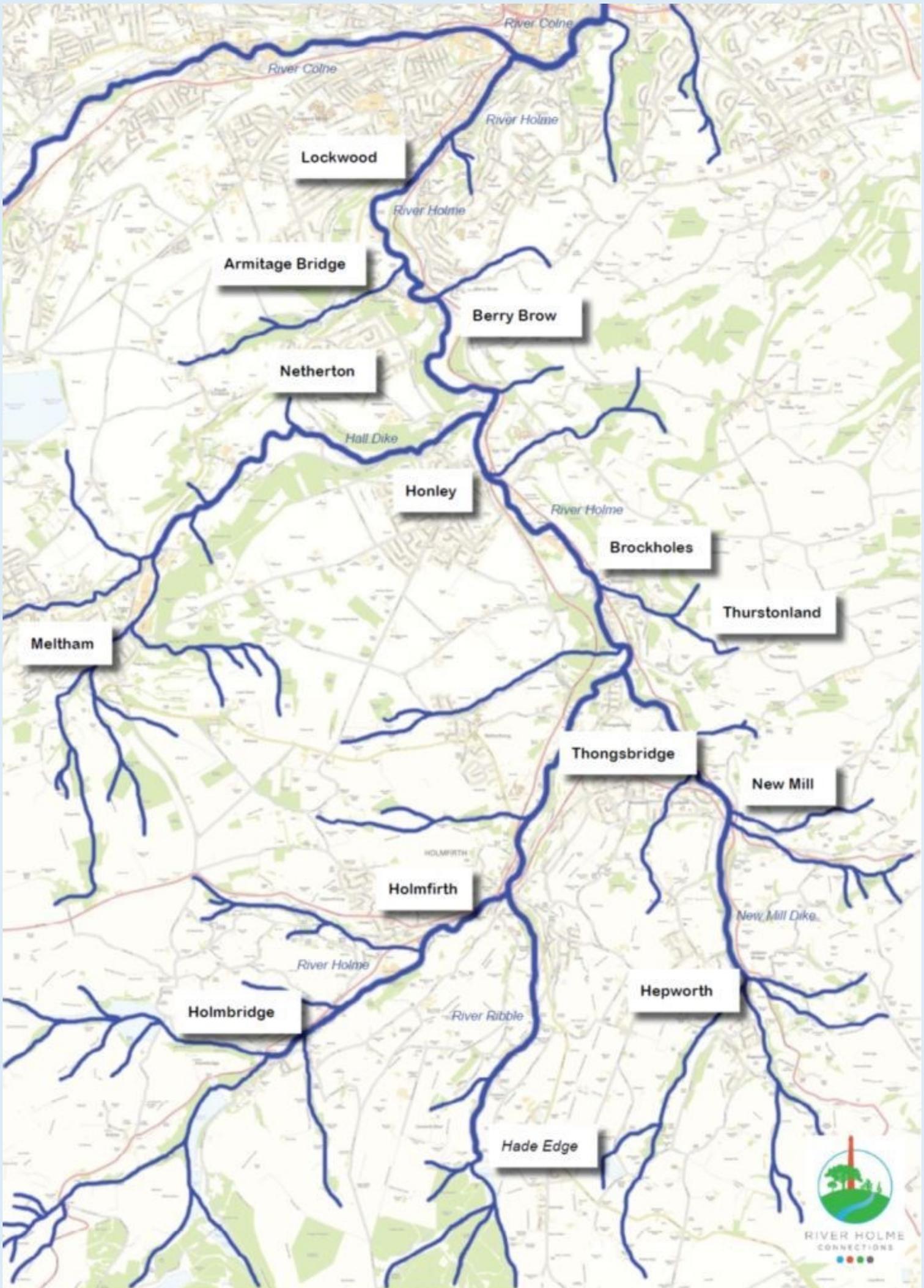


Background.....	5
Chair of Trustees' report.....	6
Executive summary.....	7
Catchment Based Approach.....	8
The numbers at a glance.....	9
Achieving more together.....	10
Our volunteers.....	11
Business partnerships.....	13
Community partnerships.....	13
Improving riverside access.....	14
Projects and events.....	15
Improving biodiversity.....	18
Educating and informing.....	20
Raising awareness.....	22
Spreading the word.....	23
Financial information.....	24
Planned projects 2020.....	26
Meet the trustees and staff.....	28
Acknowledgements.....	29



**River Holme Connections is the public name
For River 2015, registered charity No. 1163873**

The amazing photos in this document were taken by our talented volunteers.



RIVER HOLME
CONNECTIONS

River Holme, Sands, Holfirth

Background

Rivers are the world's arteries. Healthy, cared-for rivers provide food, shelter and a breeding ground for invertebrates, fish and animals: vital for a healthy, functioning ecosystem.

People need rivers too. They provide drinking water, and green outdoor spaces can benefit our physical and mental health.

Here in the Holme Valley, the River Holme and its tributaries have been the lifeblood of communities for centuries. During the industrial revolution, the River Holme powered the growth of the area's textile industry. Village communities grew up along the riverbanks as people arrived to work in the mills and dyehouses. Downstream, in Victorian times, Lockwood established itself as a spa town to rival Harrogate. The wood running beside the river parallel to Albert Street in Lockwood is still known as Spa Wood.

In recent times, a growing disconnect between people and the natural world has seen rivers and wildlife suffer from unintentional neglect. The River Holme and its tributaries became rife with invasive plant species, which reduce biodiversity and erode riverbanks. Litter polluted the water and harmed wildlife. Meanwhile, buildings and infrastructure reduced access to the river.

Change came in 2015. A group of like-minded people established the charity River 2015. Their aim: to restore the health of the River Holme and improve access for all.

Now known by the public name River Holme Connections, our charity is making a difference. Helped by dedicated volunteers, we're making the River Holme a better place for people and wildlife.

The River Holme catchment (see map left)

The River Holme starts life in the moorland above Holmfirth. Runoff from precipitation falling within the surrounding area eventually drains into the River Holme, or its tributaries. There's the River Ribble that joins the Holme at Holmfirth. New Mill Dike flows through New Mill then joins the Holme beyond

Thongsbridge, while Meltham Dike becomes Hall Dike and Magbrook before merging with the Holme. There are many more contributory waterways: Dean Dike, Black Sike Dike and the curiously-named Dog Dike and Mark Bottoms Dike.

Ambition and strategy

We'll continue to improve the river for people by enhancing access, building and maintaining the banks and improving signage. In addition, The River Holme has a 'moderate' ecological status from the Environment Agency. Our overall ambition, is to implement projects that help the Environment Agency to achieve its goal of bringing the River Holme catchment to 'Good' standard by 2027.

We will do this through:

- Tackling pollution
- Clearing litter and plastic waste
- Improving the river for wildlife
- Removing invasive species
- Planting wildlife-friendly flowers
- Riverfly monitoring
- Fish population monitoring
- Public education and awareness
- Planting trees to reduce flooding, help wildlife and combat carbon emissions.
- Working with schools, inspiring the next generation to look after and protect our rivers.



Chair's report

Adrian Barraclough

Stewardship of your river (removal of litter, treatment of invasive species) and education have also grown in the past year. These are vital activities for protecting what we have, along with spreading a positive message of caring and inspiring the next generation to be proud of their local river.

2019 was the year of green action which we at River Holme Connections, our volunteers and supporters embraced wholeheartedly and enthusiastically. Thanks to a groundswell of support from local people, business, sponsors and grants we continue to improve access, habitats and wildlife along the River Holme and its tributaries for everyone to enjoy.

In my opinion, with people talking more about climate change, nature recovery and the health and wellbeing benefits of the great outdoors than ever before, there is no better place to be inspired than down by your local river, whatever the weather.

The team have completed some amazing projects this year, including: the footpath and seating at Sands Recreation Ground; refurbishment of Meltham Pleasure Grounds, transforming the experience for the local community and visitors; Duck Feeding Area at Crown Bottom; Bottoms Mill footpath and access; and, last but not least, major footpath and signage improvements around Spa Wood in Huddersfield. All of which are transforming peoples experience and creating magic moments.

Two of my magic 2019 River Holme moments were the sighting of a kingfisher in Holmfirth, and the smile and delight on children's faces playing in Meltham Pleasure Grounds at the new seating area.



We are now in our fourth year working towards our vision of a natural greenway for people to enjoy between Digley and Huddersfield and the tributaries from Meltham and New Mill. With your continued support we can continue to transform our relationship with the river.

Please do take a moment to read about the fantastic work that is going on. If you are inspired please do join us whether signing up for a newsletter, taking part in our volunteer work days or making a donation. All monies raised do go into improving your river.

Thank you.

All that's left for me to say is: do explore and create your own magic River Holme moment!

**Adrian Barraclough,
Chair, River Holme Connections**

Executive summary

2019 was a year of change for River Holme Connections. Many of the capital projects that kept the team and volunteers busy over the past few years neared, or reached, completion. The refurbished Duck Feeding Area at Crown Bottom and the new paths at Sands and Bottoms Mill are all now officially open.

The *Our Holme* project, funded by The Cummins Foundation, saw a greater focus on education and young people. It also provided funding for a GIS specialist, Ryan Lloyd, to join the team and map the River Holme. By providing valuable baseline data on wildlife, invasive species, litter hotspots and more, his work will enable future resources to be targeted more effectively.

The benefits to the community of our dedicated River Steward, Simon Hirst, were clearly illustrated in 2019. Volunteer tasks and total hours donated doubled from the previous year's figures.

As always we're indebted to our volunteers, who continue to exceed our expectations. In 2019, they

donated an incredible 5,418 volunteer hours, even organising their own fundraising events. With their help we've cleared 419 bags of rubbish from the river and banks, treated 13.8 km of Japanese knotweed, and planted almost 4,000 trees.

Education was a key focus this year. We held more talks, and trained more volunteers than ever before, equipping them with skills as diverse as fish population monitoring and the safe use of pesticides. Through the *Our Holme* project, and our involvement with STEAM week, we've given almost 1,250 young people the opportunity to learn about our rivers. Education will remain a priority for 2020, along with our river improvement projects.

As anticipated, income dropped by a quarter. In October 2018, we received a major grant for the *Our Holme* project that was completed in October 2019.

Our reach, via social media and local press, has continued to grow, with engagement increasing significantly and press coverage worth almost £55,000 achieved.



Thank you
to everyone who
helped to make 2019 our
most successful year to date.

Catchment Based Approach

Only 14% of England's rivers are at 'Good Ecological Status' within the Water Framework Directive.

Water quality

Our rivers are facing many challenges. Man-made obstacles obstruct 99% of all rivers in England and Wales, large aquatic mammals have declined by 88% since 1970, and plastic pollution is choking our rivers and wildlife.

There's also a cost to the economy with £1.2bn spent each year removing pollutants to make water potable.

From 'moderate' to 'good'

As a river charity, we're continuing our work to help the Environment Agency improve the quality of water within the River Holme catchment from 'moderate' to 'good' ecological status by 2027.

Invertebrates and fish are particularly sensitive to pollution. We're training more volunteers, so that

we can continue our annual invertebrate and fish population monitoring programme. This gives a good indication as to how successful our work is in improving the health of our rivers.

Catchment Based Approach

To achieve our goal, and make the River Holme catchment better for people and wildlife, we've adopted a Catchment Based Approach (CaBa).

This means that we work collaboratively with local communities, groups, charities and organisations, to get things done.

We're also Catchment Champions for the Calder Catchment Partnership, which encourages cross-border working and best practice regarding river stewardship. In this role, we share information with other River Trusts and statutory bodies including the Environment Agency.

The numbers at a glance

In 2019 we have...



Benefited from
5,418 hours of
volunteer input



Planted **3,852**
trees, helping
wildlife and flood
management



Held **138**
events and
work parties



Treated **13.8km**
of river for invasive
Japanese knotweed



Gave **1,238**
young people river
education and
experience



Removed **419** bags
of rubbish from the
river catchment



Invested almost **£188,500**
worth of funding from grants
and donations in helping to
improve our local rivers

...exceeded all our targets!

Achieving more together

There are more than 25 miles of waterways in the River Holme catchment. Partnership working and volunteer support is therefore essential if our small team is to make a big difference to the river environment.

River Steward, Simon Hirst, supported by

Operations Support, Jane Skilling, has significantly increased the number of river improvement activities and work parties, resulting in greater volunteer engagement and more opportunities for collaborative working with like-minded community groups.

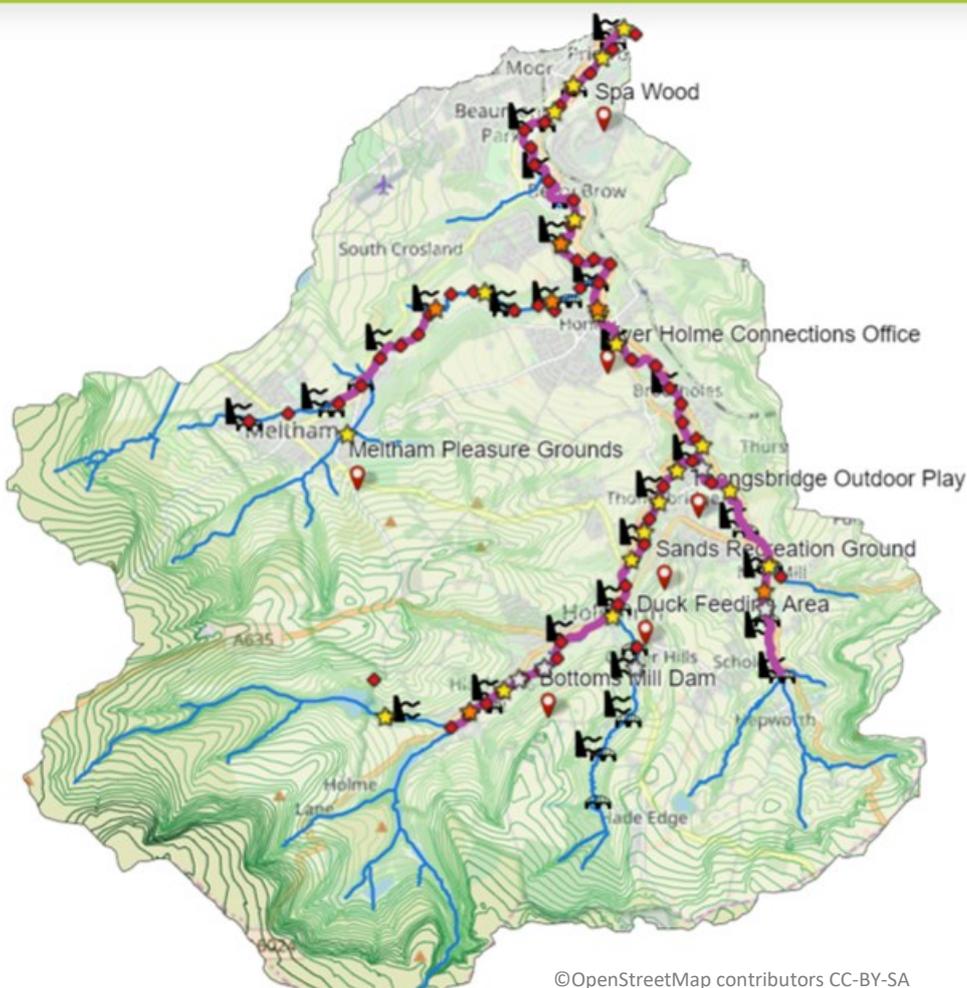
Mapping the River Holme

Through the *Our Holme* project, funded by The Cummins Foundation, we employed Ryan Lloyd, a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) specialist, on a summer placement. Ryan was responsible for physically mapping the River Holme.

Together with 12 volunteers, who donated 100 hours, Ryan spent the summer months walking the length and breadth of the River Holme

catchment. Using electronic mapping equipment, Ryan recorded the location and frequency of various birds, invasive plant species, litter hotspots, river features and more.

Ryan's vital work has provided valuable data about the River Holme. The information will target our charity's future work more effectively and efficiently. It also provides an important baseline against which we can benchmark river improvement projects.



Birds

- ☆ Grey Herons 2019
- ★ Wrens 2019
- ★ King Fishers 2019
- ★ Grey Wagtails 2019
- ★ Dippers 2019
- ★ Cuckoos 2019
- Bird Boxes

Invasive Species

- Cherry Laurel 2019
- Rhododendron 2019
- ▲ Himalayan Balsam 2019
- ◆ Japanese Knotweed 2019
- ▲ Monbretia 2019
- Invasive Treatment Area 2019

River Features

- 🏰 Stone Weirs
- 🌉 Bridges

Base Map

- 📍 Sites
- 🗺 Boundary Mask
- 🌊 River Holme & Tributaries
- 🏞 Contour Lines
 - 70 - 100 m
 - 100 - 200 m

Our volunteers

Volunteers are the backbone of our organisation. It's their practical help and skills in everything from bird box making to video creation that is helping us to make the River Holme better for people and wildlife.

5,418
volunteer
hours

With more opportunities and ways to get involved than ever before volunteer engagement rocketed. During 2019, volunteer hours doubled to **5,418**. That's the equivalent of three, full-time workers.

Volunteer training

Our volunteer training programme continued in 2019, with a total of 19 volunteers given formal training.

- Riverfly training - 5 x volunteers (22.5 hrs)
- Fish population monitoring - 8 x volunteers (48 hrs)
- Safe use of pesticide training - 6 volunteers (138 hrs)

Training volunteers helps to maximise our resources, giving us more individuals who can help with monitoring and invasive control work. The six individuals awarded a Level 2, City and Guilds qualification in the safe use of pesticides, volunteered for more than 85 hours in total this year, helping to control Japanese knotweed throughout the River Holme catchment.

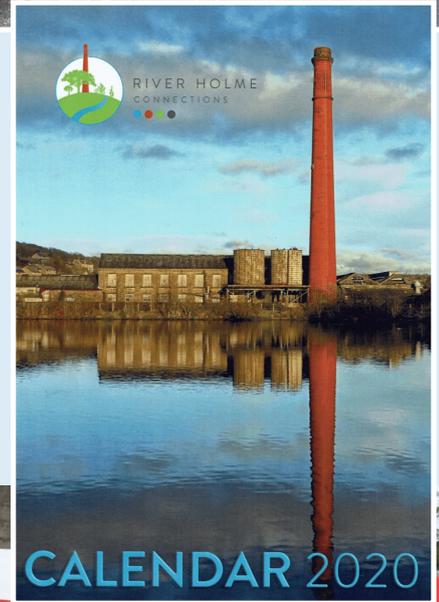


Fish population monitoring

Our volunteers (cont'd)

In 2019, we held 138 events and work parties. With help from volunteers we achieved:

- Essential river clean-ups and improvements to riverside routes: 419 bags of rubbish collected, plus 133 tyres, six scooters, two shopping trolleys, one suitcase and a bed!
- Native tree and hedge planting to aid flood management: 3,852 trees and hedges planted over 13 days by 119 volunteers.
- Improved habitats for wildlife - 99 bat and bird boxes installed, 3,639 plug plants grown and planted.
- Fundraising:
 - Volunteer, Sue Harrison held a cake and coffee day at Thongsbridge Cricket Club. Her amazing efforts raised more than £1,500 to refurbish the white bridge at Sands Recreation Ground.
 - Volunteer Michael Forster Jones created a 2020 calendar with photos of the catchment. The calendars raised about £1,000 for our charity.



Business partnerships

Stewardship

Our stewardship scheme continued in 2019. We provided a variety of services, including invasive plant control, coppicing, river clean-ups, wild flower and hedge planting, habitat piles and habitat creation on behalf of:

- Bower Roebuck, New Mill Dyke
- Holmfirth Dyers
- Cummins Turbo Technologies



Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Once again, we partnered with **Cummins Turbo Technologies**. Members of the Cummins team spent time helping with practical and office-based activities as part of their CSR activities. Tasks included river clean-ups, bird box installation, path clearances, bridge painting, administration work and more.

Huddersfield-based, **Lubrizol**, took advantage of our CSR programme in 2019. Ten colleagues helped with litter picking, balsam control and bird box installation.



Community partnerships

We work in partnership with a number of local organisations, including Kirklees Council, Holmfirth Transition Town (HoTT), Natural Kirklees, Environment Agency, Calder Catchment Partnership, and other local groups within the catchment, including:

Friends of Meltham Pleasure Grounds

Work has continued with Friends of Meltham Pleasure Grounds. We've assisted with invasive species removal, the creation of a seating and picnic area, tree planting, and took part in the Festival of Light.

Greenstreams

Together with Greenstreams, we've improved access

and signage to Snow Island near Huddersfield town centre, and Spa Wood, Lockwood.

National Citizen Service (NCS)

We were a community partner for the National Citizen Service. As part of the NCS programme, Young people aged 16-17, volunteered with River Holme Connections for a week. They undertook practical planting work and held an event raising about £90 for our charity.

Schools and youth groups

We've partnered with local schools, scouts, guides and youth groups, running competitions, hosting work parties and practical educational tasks.

Improving riverside access

Giving local people and visitors greater access to the River Holme is one of the cornerstones of our charity's work. In 2019, we completed many of our capital projects making access to the River Holme easier and safer for everyone.

Duck Feeding Area, Crown Bottom, Holmfirth

Welcoming 40,000 visitors each year, the Duck Feeding Area is an important river access point in Holmfirth. Over the past two years, we've implemented structural, path and flood management improvements. In 2019, we officially completed Phase 2, which involved installing two sculptural benches and an information board.

The refurbished Duck Feeding Area was officially opened on Friday 15th March.



Sands Recreation Area, Holmfirth

Sands offers a relatively flat area of publicly accessible land close to the river. We improved access for all by installing an all-weather path suitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. This year we completed Sands Phase 2, installing benches which were reclaimed from the Duck Feeding Area, a noticeboard and refurbishing the White Bridge by installing new railings.

The new path was officially opened on Friday 15th March.



Bottoms Mill, near Hinchcliffe Mill

Our aim was to give more people the opportunity to access Bottoms Mill safely, yet without disturbing native wildlife that live on and near the riverbank. In 2019, we resurfaced 660m of path with local stone.

We also installed entrance gates from Woodhead Road and three information boards, to educate and inform visitors about the wildlife, history and walks associated with this historic area. To celebrate the opening of Bottoms Mill path on Friday 15th March, we invited 35 children from Upperthong Primary School for an educational river explorer day.



Spa Wood, Lockwood

Our aim was to encourage more people to use the riverside path through Spa Wood that runs from Scar Lane in Lockwood to Colne Road. Working closely with Kirklees Council and Greenstreams, we tidied and cut back the paths, refurbished the seating areas, and installed hard standing and railings for added safety. To let people know about the footpath we also refurbished the waymarkers at the entrance to both ends of the path.



Cobbett Environmental Ltd.: Significant funding for the capital projects at Sands, the Duck Feeding Area, Bottoms Mill and Spa Wood came from Cobbett Environmental Ltd. through the Landfill Communities Fund .

Projects and events

Improving access to the river is just one element of our work at River Holme Connections. Education, habitat and biodiversity improvement, and monitoring fish and invertebrate populations are all important aspects of our river conservation and improvement work.

Yorkshire Water Blockage Free Challenge

Yorkshire Water deals with 30,000 sewer blockages every year, costing £2.4 million, 40% of which are caused by wipes. We were awarded funding to help promote their Blockage Free Challenge Campaign. To support the campaign, which finishes in summer 2020, we:

- Held four river improvement days.
- Ran a 'Blockage Busters' poster competition for young people. Judged by Dr Simpo of Ameliorate Animation, the winning poster was displayed around the catchment.
- Ran a social media and information campaign to get across the message that wipes block pipes and to never pour fats and oils down the drain.

The overall aim of this campaign is to reduce blockages leading to a cleaner and greener river corridor for all to enjoy.



Hannah presented with her winning poster

Tree planting

Trees are vital for a healthy river system. They absorb water and help to create resilience in the ecosystem to floods, droughts and pollution. They also 'capture' carbon dioxide, an important element in the fight against climate change.

With significant funding from the Bright Green Community Trust and Holmfirth Transition Town

(HoTT), and generous support from other funding partners, we're planting over 5,000 native trees and hedges during winter 2019 and spring 2020.

To date, 92 volunteers have donated 202 hours to plant 3,872 native trees and shrubs.

This work will continue in 2020.



Meltham Pleasure Grounds—Routes

As part of our Routes project, which aims to create signposted walks throughout the catchment, we've worked closely with Friends of Meltham Pleasure Grounds (MPG) to help improve signage and facilities at MPG.

As part of the project, helped by our volunteers we created a path and installed a picnic area and benches at the riverside location. To complete the project, we held a work party to plant native hedges along the riverbank.

Projects and events

Our Holme

We received significant funding from the Cummins Community Foundation to deliver a community engagement project focussing on Spa Wood in Lockwood, an area that is underused by local families.

Known as *Our Holme*, our vision for the year-long project was to encourage people living in and around Lockwood to experience the benefits of spending time in green areas. We also wanted to educate the next generation about the river, its wildlife and the role it plays in creating a healthy environment.



Spa Wood river clean-up



Nature's Medicine event



Nature's Quest event



Our Holme Spa Wood

Community events

Throughout June, local families were invited to a series of events in around Spa Wood. Four different events encouraged people to engage with the river environment and experience the benefits it offers. A further two events took place for residents of Lockwood nursing homes.

Path clearance and river clean-ups

Spa Wood is a haven for wildlife but fly tipping and neglect has taken its toll on the ancient woodland. The *Our Holme* project included several river, woodland and path clearance events, invasive species removal and replanting.

Educating young people

Research showed that young people in the area spend very little time outdoors and have little connection with nature and wildlife. To address this issue we:

- Delivered Citizen Science projects to more than 200

primary and infant school children in local schools.

- Took 350 children on River Explorer Days in the Peak National Park.
- Gave a further 850 schoolchildren the opportunity to learn more about our rivers and wildlife.



Langsett River Explorer Days



Learning about wildlife

Our Holme Festival

We hosted a two-day festival in October at the University of Huddersfield.

Day one: 252 tickets requested for 5 x river-related talks by leading experts

Day two: 120 primary school children from three local schools took part in four river-related activities.

The event was supported by Moors for the Future Bogtastic Bus and received significant media coverage, including a feature on Kirklees TV.



Our Holme presentations



River bug ID



Bogtastic Bus



University visit

River mapping

The project included funding for Ryan Lloyd, a geographical information systems (GIS) specialist, to map the River Holme. The baseline data provides a benchmark to inform future conservation activities (see page 10).

Legacy artwork

An accessible, circular Spa Wood walk was designed and created in hard copy and electronic format for use by people of all ages and abilities. The walk includes historical information as well as facts about the wildlife found in Spa Wood.



Legacy:

The community work has allowed us to reach new audiences. Many more people are now aware of Spa Wood, the River Holme and the health and well-being benefits green and blue open spaces provide.

Spa Wood is in a much better condition. Litter and invasive species have been removed from the river and woodland, and railings added to the refurbished seating areas. New wayfinding signage makes the path easier to identify and find.



Thank you!

The project was also made possible thanks to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, support from Peak District National Park Authority, First Bus and the University of Huddersfield and our guest speakers: Chris Dean, Moors for the Future, Andrew McCloy, Peak District National Park Authority, Professor Carolyn Roberts, Professor Emerita of Environment and Fellow, Gresham College, London, Rob Casey, Thames Warden, Water Conservators Company, Dr Paul Gaskell, North of England Programme Manager, Wild Trout Trust

People's Postcode Lottery—Holme Improvements

In autumn 2019, we received funding, thanks to support from players of People's Postcode Lottery (PPL), for a year-long improvement project along the River Holme catchment.

Known as *Holme Improvements*, we are working with local communities to transform green spaces throughout the catchment.

In 2019 we:

- Held four wildflower events, planting more than 570 native plug plants.
- Held 3 river clean-up events
- Planted more than 650 native trees and hedges.

Holme Improvements will continue until summer 2020, (see p26).



Open Day

On Thursday 14th March, we held an Open Day at the Old Bridge Hotel, Holmfirth. The drop-in day was an opportunity to showcase our work to local people and tell them more about our forthcoming projects.

It was also an opportunity to listen to local people and discover what they want from our rivers. More than 75 people attended the event throughout the day, and 18 suggestions and ideas for potential projects given.

Improving biodiversity

Invasive, non-native plant and animal species (INNS) can damage wildlife and upset fragile ecosystems.

Invasive plants, such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, rhododendron, giant hogweed, montbretia and American skunk cabbage, crowd out native species and erode riverbanks. Many of these species thrive unchecked in our climate, overshadowing native plants and reducing the availability of

food and habitats for native animal species. This cumulative effect is a reduction in biodiversity of plant and animal species.

Invasive animals, with no natural predators can decimate native animal and fish populations. American mink, for example, are efficient predators responsible for the decline in native water vole populations. They're also known to prey on kingfishers.

INNS Out

Over the past four years we've taken aggressive action against invasive plant species along the River Holme. Helped by volunteers, we've bashed balsam, dug out American skunk cabbage and controlled Japanese knotweed along the river banks.

In 2019, we continued our INNS Out programme, removing invasive species and replanting with native plug plants, many of which were grown by our volunteers.

This year's river mapping work identified various invasive plant species. This knowledge will help us to be more effective and efficient at targeting our future INNS control work.



Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed is classified as a controlled waste product and must be treated by licenced operatives, and disposed of at licenced sites. Our long-term plan is to rid the Holme River catchment of Japanese knotweed through raising awareness, education and practical control programmes.

After four years of planned, methodical treatment along the River Holme catchment, we're winning the battle against this invasive species. In 2019 we:

- Trained and accredited six individuals to treat Japanese knotweed.
- Treated 13.8km of riverside (up to 3m either side of the banks).
- Injected 2,236 Japanese knotweed stems.
- Sprayed 6,920m² of Japanese knotweed (an area the size of more than 26 tennis courts).
- Contacted 131 riparian landowners, with a legal obligation to treat Japanese knotweed, about the issue.
- Secured funding from landowners and other partners to continue work in 2020



Controlling Japanese knotweed on Holme



Himalayan balsam

This invasive plant grows quickly and spreads easily, but can be removed by pulling or bashing. It means that almost everyone, including younger children can take part in 'balsam bashing' work parties. In 2019, we continued our programme to control Himalayan balsam within the River Holme catchment:

- 14 Himalayan balsam control events took place.
- 118 volunteers took part.
- 357 volunteer hours donated (that's more than 44.5 working days).

American skunk cabbage

Working in conjunction with Friends of Meltham Pleasure Grounds we removed American skunk cabbage from a large area of land within Meltham Pleasure Grounds.

Balsam bashing work parties



Work party clearing American skunk cabbage from Meltham Pleasure Grounds



Meltham Pleasure Grounds following replanting with native plant species



Replanting

Removing invasive plant species is only half the story. Following removal, it's vital that the bare riverbanks are replanted with native plants and flowers. This provides a natural habitat, food and shelter for native animal species, encouraging them to return and thrive. In winter 2018, we collected native plant seeds that were grown by volunteers and replanted throughout the catchment:

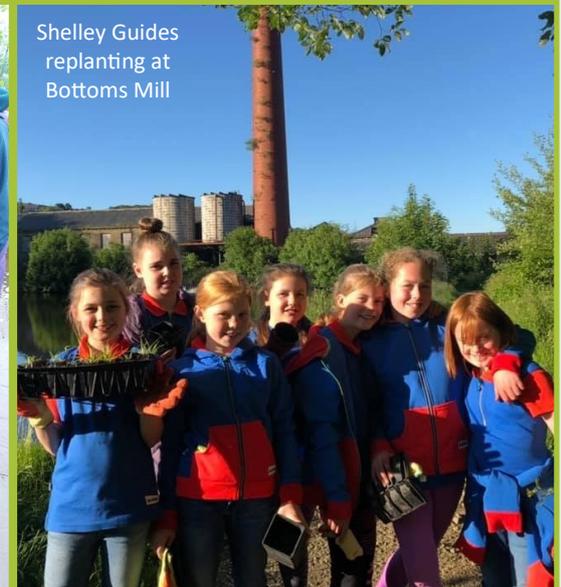
- 15 planting events took place.
- 3,639 plug plants grown and planted.



Mr and Mrs Pickles grew plug plants



Volunteer Helen, and the plug plants



Shelley Guides replanting at Bottoms Mill

Educating

Research shows that young people spend significantly less time outdoors than their parents did in childhood.

Educating the next generation

Many young people are losing touch with nature, which can have a devastating effect on our rivers and wildlife.

Children and young people are the future custodians of our rivers. It's crucial that this generation has a proper understanding and appreciation of the vital role rivers play in our lives if they are to continue maintaining and improving our rivers for the benefit of people and wildlife.

At River Holme Connections, educating children and young people is a key focus of our work. In 2019, we took our education programme to the next level. Over the year, we hosted a total of 17 education days giving 1,238 children and young people the opportunity to experience the river environment.

Bottoms Mill opening

To celebrate the official opening, on 15th March, a class of Year 5 and 6 children from Upperthong Junior and Infant School visited Bottoms Mill. They took part in a series of educational river activities around the mill pond.

River Explorer days

Three primary schools close to Spa Wood took part in River Explorer days as part of the *Our Holme* project. Throughout May and June, 275 Year 5 children from Mount Pleasant Primary School, Oak Primary School, and Newsome Junior School, took part in River Explorer days at Langsett, thanks to generous support from Peak National Park and First Bus. A further 258 pupils from Mount Pleasant and Newsome primary schools enjoyed River Explorer days in school.



Full STEAM ahead

During STEAM Week (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), 20th to 24th May, we partnered with Honley CE(VC) Junior, Infant and Nursery School. Over the five-day period, 519 children aged 4-11 years, took part in river-related activities. Older children visited the River Holme, while for younger children the river was brought to the classroom, along with fun, engaging activities.

Holmfirth High School

Throughout 2019, we partnered with Land Based Studies students from Holmfirth High School. As part of their course, the Year 11 Students learned about river management and helped with tree planting and a variety of other river-related tasks.

Our Holme Festival

As part of the Our Holme Festival, funded by Cummins Foundation, we invited 120, Year 5 and 6 children from Oak Primary School, Newsome Junior School and Mount Pleasant Primary School for a series of educational river activities at the University of Huddersfield.

The University held an age-appropriate lecture, tour of the University, and Moors for the Future brought along the Bogtastic Bus to educate children about the role our moorland plays in draining water into our rivers.

Giving the next generation a reason to care about, and take care of our rivers

Raising awareness

In 2019, our popular programme of educational walks and talks continued. We also participated in several 'Fun Days', organised by partner organisation, to engage with a wider audience.

Walks and Talks

84 people (and 2 dogs) took part in our walks and talks in 2019. 14 individuals were U25 years of age, and 11 of these were U18, illustrating that our commitment to reaching a younger audience is working.

Bird Walk and Talk: 27th January

Celebrating RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch, Huddersfield BWC lead a bird walk and talk along the River Holme at Spa Wood and Longley Wood.

6 people spotted, among others, dippers, cormorants mallards, a grey heron, great spotted woodpecker, sparrow hawk, nuthatch.



Moorland Walk and Talk: 5th June

Tom Aspinall, Moors for the Future, led an evening walk to Black Hill trig point, celebrating National Volunteers' Week. He talked about Moors for the Future's work to reverse the environmental catastrophe created by the our industrial past. 6 people joined in.



Bat Walk and Talk: 30th August

Glyn Wilson, Yorkshire Bat Conservation Group led 36 people, including a family of three generations, along a bat walk and talk at Bottoms Mill, spotting common pipistrelles.

I really enjoyed the Bat walk it was fun and educational. I learned lots of new things about bats, my favourite fact was that largest in the world was 5.6 feet in length. It was very cool and interesting to use a bat detector, I really enjoyed seeing all the bats, and I'd love to do another bat walk again.
Thank You
From Andrew age 10



Butterfly Walk and Talk: 14th July

At the start of the Big Butterfly Count Week, Paul and Alistair from Butterfly Conservation Trust led a butterfly walk.

The 14 adults and 3 children (under 10s) spotted ringlets, meadow brown, small skipper, large white, cinnabar moth, 5-spot burnet moth, hummingbird hawkmoth and a hawthorn shield bug.

Fun Days

By supporting Newsome Fun Day (below right) and New Mill Coop's Fun Day (below centre and left), we engaged more than 20 young people with age-appropriate river-based quizzes and activities.



Spreading the word

Facebook



- Total no. of **followers increased from 367 to 666.**
- Total no. of **page likes increased from 368 to 627.**
- Most effective single post featured giant hogweed, reaching **6.7k: 2k post clicks and 143 reactions / comments/shares**, on 16 July 2019.



Instagram



- **Followers increased from 52 to 112.**
- Potential to grow audience.



Twitter



- **Followers increased from 307 to 451.**
- Average monthly **impressions more than doubled from 12,300 to 27,700.**



You Tube



- Account created in 2019.
- 18 x videos posted.
- 9 x subscribers.
- **Average viewers 29.5 per video.**



News Stream Newsletter



- Monthly newsletter sent to 396 subscribers.
- **Open rate averaged 39.4 6%.**
- Clicks per unique open averaged 20.03%.



Editorial coverage



- **4 articles** in Huddersfield Examiner and Examiner Live.
- **14 articles** in Holme Valley Review (inc cover story).
- 1 x 6-page & 1x2-page feature in Ways of Seeing West Yorkshire e-zine.
- Total of **1,091 column inches.**
- Advertising equivalent value of **£54,742.92**



Facebook followers & Twitter impressions **doubled**

Editorial coverage worth more than **£54,700**

Financial information

Please note: a full set of accounts is available to view at the River Holme Connections office.
Please call 01484 661756 to arrange an appointment.

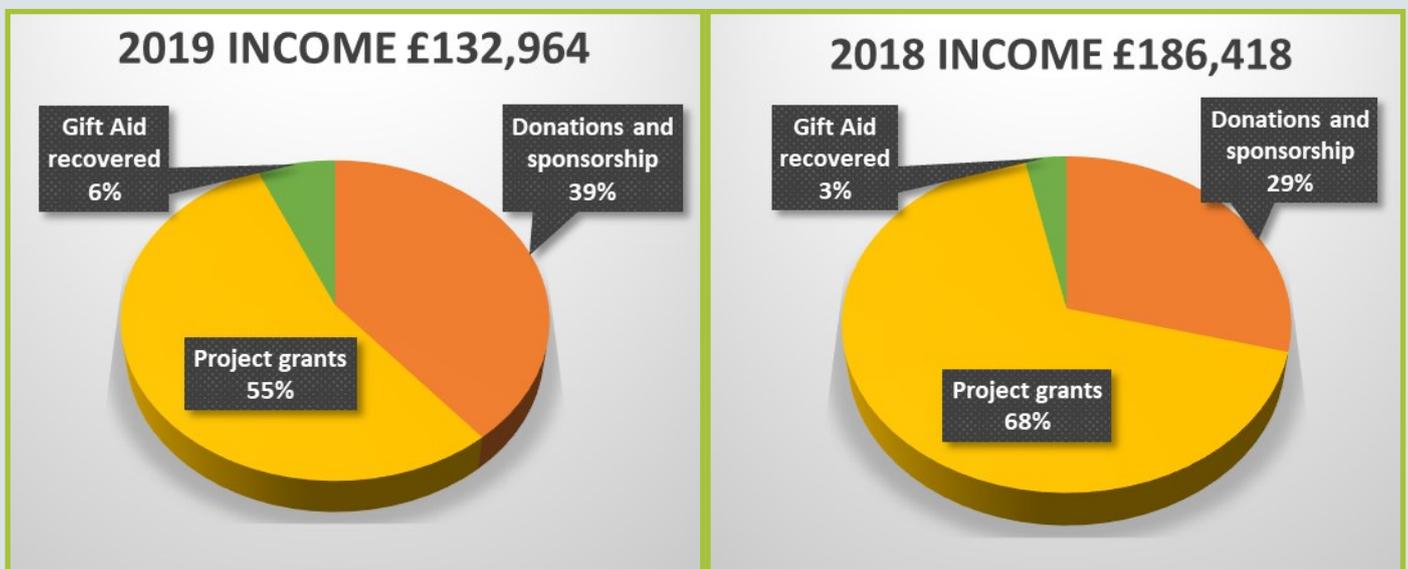
Income

In 2019, we received a total income of £132,964, a 29% decrease on the funds raised in 2018.

This comprised:

Income	2019	2018
Project grants	£73,130.20	£126,011.00
Gift Aid recovered	£7,977.84	£6,145.00
Donations and sponsorship	£51,855.96	£54,262.00
Total:	£132,964.00	£186,418.00

The main reasons for total income falling by more than a quarter, was due to a major grant - for work to be completed in 2019 - being paid in October 2018.



Expenditure

Expenditure for 2019 increased by 59% compared with 2018, with an additional £70,118 spent throughout 2019.

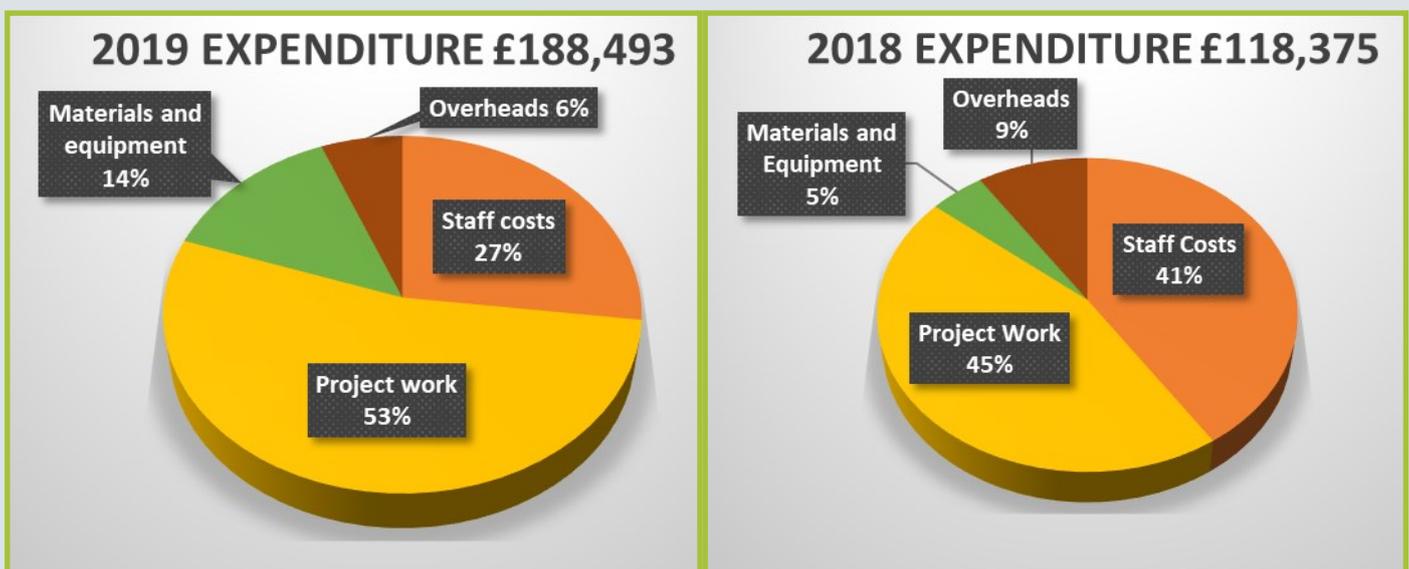
This comprised:

Expenditure	2019	2018
Project work	£99,901.29	£53,627.00
Staff costs	£50,893.11	£48,162.00
Materials and equipment	£26,389.02	£5,524.00
Overheads	£11,309.58	£11,062.00
Total:	£188,493.00	£118,375.00

Staff and overhead costs were comparable with 2018, reflecting a tight control on these items of expenditure. Project costs almost doubled compared with 2018, while materials and equipment spend almost quadrupled. The Cummins Foundation grant covered the costs for materials and equipment. Moving forward, this will avoid the need for ongoing hire charges of some equipment.

Additional expenditure

At the end of 2018, there was a surplus of £68,000. Approximately £61,000 of this related to the grant received in October 2018, which funded a major project that was completed in October 2019. Together with other funding received throughout 2019, this leaves a balance of approximately £12,500 at the end of 2019. This will be used to fund development work and take advantage of any opportunities that arise in 2020.



Planned projects 2020

While many capital projects have reached completion, 2020 has several exciting community and education projects in store.

Routes

To help people identify walks and access points to the river, we will install signposts at four locations. Fingerposts will direct people from Spa Wood to Snow Island in Lockwood, highlight Meltham Pleasure Grounds, and indicate the location of walks at Thongsbridge and Brockholes.

Duck Feeding Area – phase 3, lighting

Cabling has been installed at the Duck Feeding Area, Crown Bottom, in Holmfirth. It's anticipated that in 2020, Kirklees Council will provide the lighting connection to complete this capital project.

Holme Improvements – People's Postcode Lottery

In 2019, we received an award from the Postcode Local Trust, a grant-giving charity funded entirely by players of the People's Postcode Lottery for our 'Holme Improvements' project. Running until summer 2020, the project will revitalise around 20km of green space throughout the catchment, through practical and educational activities. Conservation days, natural flood management, native tree and hedge planting, invasive species removal and wildflower planting will make a visible difference. By training volunteers and educating the public, the project will teach people how to care for the river in the future and provide a legacy.

Supported by players of



Awarded funds from



Sands – phase 3, white bridge renovation

A volunteer cake day event raised funds for the white bridge at Sands to be renovated. This will take place in 2020 when the weather improves.

Yorkshire Water Blockage Free Challenge

In summer 2019, we started a year-long project to educate people about the damage to rivers and sewage pipes caused by flushing wipes and pouring fats and oils down the drain. With funding from Yorkshire Water's Blockage Free Challenge Community Fund, we carried out practical river clean-ups, ran a blockage free poster competition for children and commenced an online education programme involving social media and blogs. This education project continues until July 2020.



INNS Out (invasive non-native species)

Work to remove and control Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam and other invasive species will continue. By replanting the treated areas with native wildflowers, we intend to create a more biodiverse habitat for wildlife.

Education

Our popular walks and talks will continue in 2020. We also plan to expand our primary school education programme, with 19 primary schools being offered River Explorer Days in 2020.

Student placement

In summer we're inviting a university student to spend their year in industry with River Holme Connections. They will be involved with practical river restoration and conservation work, and help at events and work parties with volunteers. They'll also help out with general office work including promotional activity and updating the river map.

Tree and hedge planting

In spring 2020, we'll complete our project to plant 5,000 native trees and hedges throughout the catchment. Almost half the trees are funded by the Bright Green Community Trust and Holmfirth Transition Town (HoTT). Planting trees helps with natural flood management, captures carbon to help combat climate change, and improves the river environment. Native trees and hedges also increase biodiversity by providing food and shelter for wildlife.



Holmfirth
TRANSITION TOWN
*Working towards Sustainable Living
in the Holme Valley*

Sands 'bog garden'

Next to the all-weather path at Sands we'll be building earthworks to create a 'bog garden'. Consisting of water-loving native plants, the bog garden will help to prevent flooding, by slowing the flow of land-drained rainwater into the River Holme. It will also increase biodiversity by providing food and shelter for invertebrates, birds and small mammals.

Making the
River Holme catchment
better for people and wildlife in 2020

Meet the trustees and staff

The Board of Trustees is responsible for leading and running the charity in a business-focussed and socially responsible way. Between them, the Trustees have a wide range of skills and experience, and are passionate about improving the River Holme catchment for people and wildlife.

Trustees



William O'Brien

Founding Trustee, William (Bill) O'Brien steps down

At the end of 2019, Bill O'Brien, one of our charity's founding Trustees, resigned from the Board of Trustees for personal reasons. Bill's association with the charity stretches back to 2012. Together with Lynva Russell, he was one of the driving forces that turned a series of casual, volunteer-led river clean-ups into a formal, funded charity.

In the early years, Bill was Treasurer and, through his company, System Vision Ltd, provided office space, equipment and IT support, giving our charity a base and foundation from which to grow and employ staff. Thanks to Bill's help, within two years, we become sufficiently established to move downstream into our own premises.

“Seeing the charity's achievements and the difference it's making to the river environment is incredible”

“It's been amazing to watch River Holme Connections grow from, what was essentially, a good idea into a charity that makes things happen. Seeing the charity's achievements and the difference it's making to the river environment is incredible. Regretfully, as happens in life, I'm unable to give the charity the time it needs and must step down as a Trustee. I know, however, that River Holme Connections is in good hands and I will continue to watch its progress with pride and interest. You never know, one day I might be able to return.” Bill O'Brien.

On behalf of River Holme Connections Board of Trustees and team, we'd like to send our heartfelt thanks to Bill for his time and generous support over the years.

RHC staff team

In 2020, the team welcomed Ryan Lloyd on a summer placement. A Geographical Information Systems (GIS) specialist, Ryan spent the summer mapping the River Holme, helped by a team of volunteers. From dippers to litter hot spots, we now know where things are, and Ryan's work will enable us to target our resources more effectively.



Jane Skilling
Operations



Simon Hirst
River Steward



Jeanette Dyson
Communications



Dan Eustance
Planning



Ryan Lloyd
GIS

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the companies and organisations that have given up their time and/or provided funding to help us over the past year. Thanks also to the landowners who have permitted us to plant trees and hedges, providing habitats for wildlife and aiding flood management.

We'd also like to say a special thank you to all our amazing volunteers. Their time and continued support in a variety of activities from office work and photography to hands-on practical work, clearing rubbish, growing plants and treating invasive species, has helped us to achieve and complete our projects.

Several of our capital projects were funded by Cobbett Environmental Ltd through the Landfill Communities Fund. Many other companies, individuals and community organisations have also contributed to our charity through the invasive species programme.

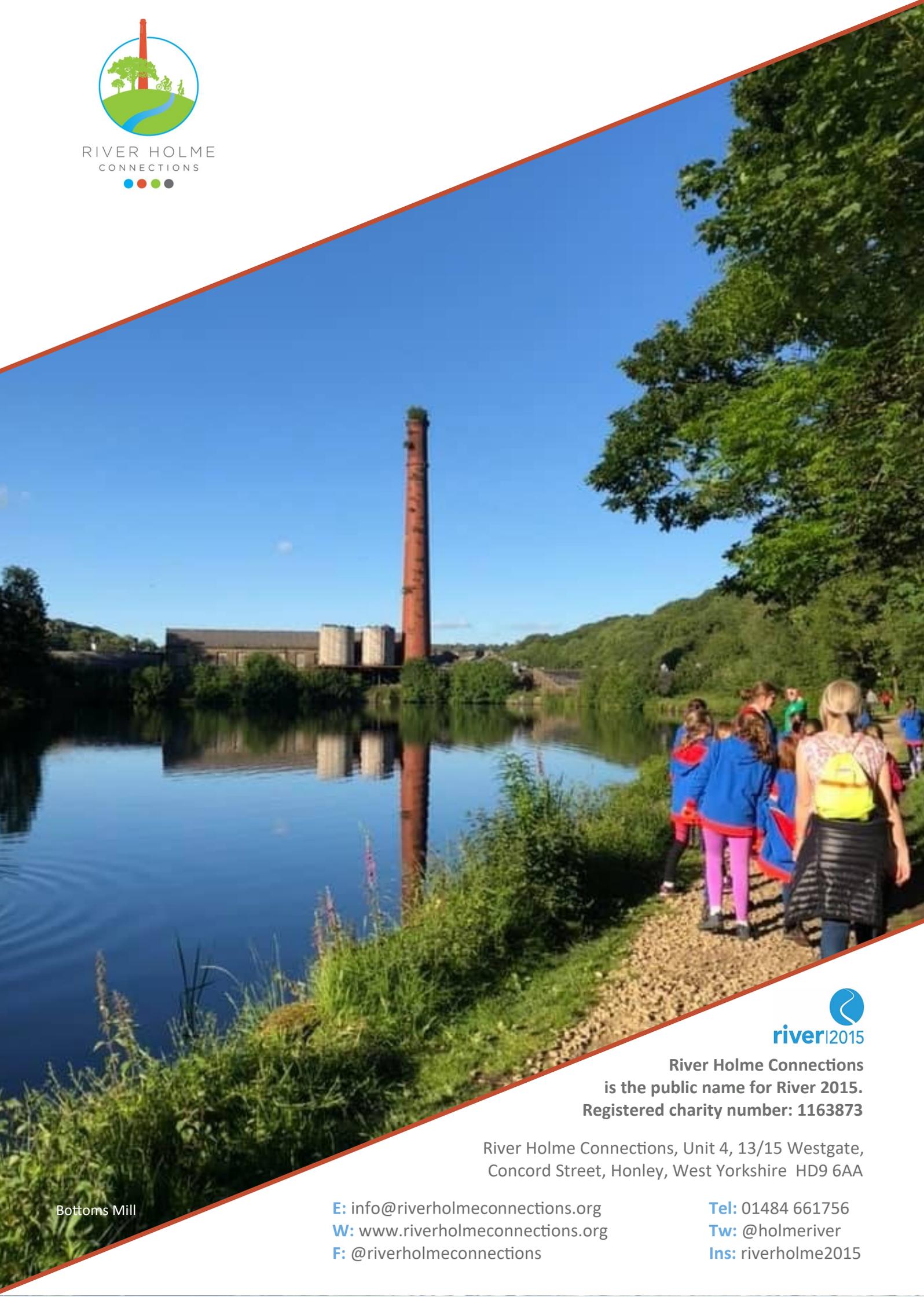
We've also received financial and in-kind support from:

- Bright Green Community Trust
- Central England Co-op
- Crossroads (Meltham)
- Cummins Turbo Technologies
- First Buses
- Holmfirth Parish Council
- Kirklees Council
- Kirklees Rural District Committee
- Longley Farm Trust
- National Citizen Service (NCS)
- Peak District National Park Authority
- The Old Bridge Hotel
- Water Conservators Company
- University of Huddersfield

Thank you!



RIVER HOLME
CONNECTIONS



Bottoms Mill



river2015

**River Holme Connections
is the public name for River 2015.
Registered charity number: 1163873**

River Holme Connections, Unit 4, 13/15 Westgate,
Concord Street, Honley, West Yorkshire HD9 6AA

E: info@riverholmeconnections.org
W: www.riverholmeconnections.org
F: [@riverholmeconnections](https://www.facebook.com/riverholmeconnections)

Tel: 01484 661756
Tw: @holmeriver
Ins: riverholme2015